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BISHOP DESMOND TUTU ADDRESSES UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST *APARTHEID*

UNITED NATIONS

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FOREWARD

The Right Reverend Bishop Desmond Tutu, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, visited the United Nations Headquarters on Monday, 23 March, for consultations with the Chairman of the Special Committee against *Apartheid*, H. E. Mr. B. Akporode Clark, and for other meetings.

The Special Committee had invited Bishop Tutu as a special guest at its meeting for the Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners (11 October) but he could not come to the United Nations Headquarters as his passport had been withdrawn by the South African regime in March 1980 and restored only recently.

On 18 October 1980, Ambassador Clark received, on behalf of Bishop Tutu, the Distinguished Human Rights Service Award of St. Philip's Church, New York.

Bishop Tutu has been an outspoken and fearless opponent of *apartheid*. In March 1980, he launched, in co-operation with Mr. Percy Qoboza, the nation-wide campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners. He was arrested with his wife, Leah, in May 1980, for participating in a demonstration of churchmen against repression, and charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act.

Bishop Tutu was born in Klerksdorp, Western Transvaal, on 7 October 1931, and was ordained in 1961.

He was educated in South Africa and the United Kingdom, and was awarded honorary doctorates by the Oxford University and Harvard University.

He was (Anglican) Dean of Johannesburg from 1975 to 1976, when he was appointed Bishop of Lesotho. He returned to South Africa in 1977 when he was elected General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST *APARTHEID*, 23 MARCH 1981

Bishop Desmond TUTU (left), General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, speaking this afternoon at special consultations of the Special Committee against Apartheid. Next to the Bishop are, from left, B. Akporode CLARK (Nigeria), Committee Chairman, and Ibrahim NOOR, Committee Secretary.

I. OPENING REMARKS

by

H.E. Mr. B. Akporode CLARK (Nigeria)

Chairman of the Special Committee against *Apartheid*

23 MARCH 1981

The 477th first meeting of the Special Committee against *Apartheid* is called to order.

On behalf of the Special Committee, I would like to welcome the Right Reverend Bishop Desmond Tutu, General-Secretary of the South African Council of Churches, and sometime Bishop of Lesotho.

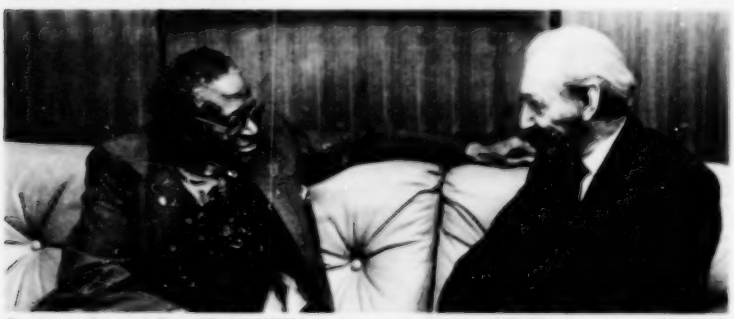
You may recall that the Special Committee had invited Bishop Tutu as a special guest to its meeting for the Day of Solidarity with South African Political Prisoners last October 11th. But he could not come to New York at the time as his passport had been withdrawn by the South African regime in March 1980. That passport was only restored to him recently.

On the 18th of October 1980, I had the great privilege and honour of receiving on behalf of Bishop Tutu, the Distinguished Human Rights Service Award of St. Philip's Church, New York — an award that was made during the 100th anniversary of that church.

Bishop Tutu has been a fearless opponent of *apartheid*. Lately, he has been the major force and voice of the oppressed people of South Africa, speaking from the very dungeon of that benighted country. In March 1980, Bishop Tutu launched in co-operation with our friend, Mr. Percy Qoboza, then editor of the *Sunday Post*, a national campaign for the release of Nelson Mandela and other political prisoners with a view to convening a national convention of all the peoples of South Africa so as to determine together the future of that country. Bishop Tutu was arrested with his wife, Leah, in May 1980 for participating in a demonstration of churchmen against repression and charged under the Riotous Assemblies Act.

In the past few days Bishop Tutu has been visiting a number of European countries and he came here over the weekend. Yesterday, we had the privilege of hearing him preach a sermon at the Church of the Intercession and all of us who were there were deeply moved by the commitment of this man of God to the cause of freedom, liberty and justice, not only in his own country, South Africa, not only in his own continent, Africa, but throughout the world.

On behalf of the Special Committee, I warmly welcome him and I invite him to make a statement.



Secretary-General Kurt WALDHEIM (right) meeting in his UN Headquarters office with Bishop Desmond TUTU, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

II. STATEMENT BY THE RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP DESMOND TUTU BEFORE THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST *APARTHEID*,

23 MARCH 1981

Your Excellency,

I come from the country that you have described so well where one can speak of the claustrophobia of oppression. I come as one who can rightly say at this point, for this one purpose that I speak on behalf of millions in expressing on behalf of those many, a deep and very warm word of appreciation for all that you, your Excellency, and the Special Committee that you lead, stand for and have done and continue to do in

striving to eradicate what I believe to be one of the most vicious systems since Nazism. Those who are voiceless, those who are without a vote, those who are without power in my country are deeply appreciative of the solidarity that your Committee and those who sit on it have demonstrated down the years. And, therefore, please accept from me, on behalf of those many victims of this pernicious evil in the world, the expression of thanks and please, on their behalf, convey it to your several Governments who have indicated that they regard *apartheid* as a system that should be eradicated. I believe, Sir, that at the present time we see a Government who are determined as never before to retain power in the hands of a white oligarchy, and who are determined as never before not to do anything that will undermine the hold that the white minority has on political power which is the key to all kinds of other power — to economic power, to social power, to education, and so forth and so on.

And the purpose of my own trip at this present time has been to see church leaders, government leaders and others who have influence in the international community to urge them to recognize that we are approaching a very serious crisis in our country, to urge them, therefore, please for the sake of our children, for the sake of the children of all South Africans, black and white, for God's sake, for the sake of world peace, that they take action, that they exert pressure on South Africa — political pressure, diplomatic pressure, and above all, economic pressure — but really take action that will persuade the South African authorities to come to the conference table before it is too late.

I have said before, as many others of my fellow countrymen have said, there is no doubt in our own minds that we are going to be free. There is no question about this at all. I have even given a timetable and said that within five to ten years we are going to have our first black Prime Minister. So there is no question in our mind about the certainty of our freedom. I have said that the only questions that are still open are how and when we are going to be free. And we would like to see that freedom come reasonably peacefully — for it can no longer be said to be peaceful, to be without bloodshed when so many of our people have died and continue to die even since 1976 — but that we would wish to see this freedom come by reasonably peaceful means and we would like it to come soon.

And therefore it is in the interest of the international community to participate with us in our struggle to see that bloodshed is avoided or minimized. And to say that *when* we become free, not *if* we become free, when we become free, we will know who were our friends, we will know who participated with us in helping us to attain our goal of freedom and in the post-liberation period, this will have an enormous influence on whom we do business with. We say we are not threatening anybody, we are merely making a statement of fact. The natural resources of our country, which have been described by so many has been of strategic importance belong to all of us — even we who are the voteless ones today — and we will have an important role in the determination of how those resources are going to be used. And therefore we believe it is very much in

the interest of the world that they help to resolve that situation and help to resolve that situation quickly.

We do not want violence. Our people are peace-loving even to a fault. I wish again to say that if that situation is not resolved reasonably quickly, it could very well be something that triggers off World War III. Now for some people that sounds melodramatic but when you have been aware of what nearly happened between the United States and the Soviet Union over Angola then you can realize that what I am saying is not a hypherbole.

May I conclude then by saying, thank you again for the tremendous solidarity that you have shown with those of us who are involved in the liberation struggle and to say that all power to you as to us, as we strive to build a new kind of South Africa — a South Africa that bases worth on the fact that people are human beings and not on colour, that they are human beings created in the image of God. And to say that we are working for the building up of a more caring, a more compassionate, a more sharing society.

Thank you, your Excellency.

III. CONCLUDING REMARKS

by

H. E. AKPORODE CLARK, CHAIRMAN
OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE AGAINST *APARTHEID*

I think we have just created a record here, Your Grace, because we have never clapped at any of our meetings, but the fact that we did is an expression of the type of admiration that we have for your person and for what you have just told us. I don't know whether my colleagues would like to ask any questions or make any comments on what the Bishop has just said. If not, I would like on your behalf to thank the Bishop for taking the time to come and see us here. Before we came here we went to see the Secretary-General of the United Nations who was kind enough to receive the Bishop and we spent a lot of time with him, much longer than the time scheduled. Consequently we were late in our appointment which we had with the President of the Security Council. Nevertheless, because of the significance of the visit, the President of the Security Council waited for almost 20 minutes to receive the Bishop. I think what you have just heard him say is important because he has given us a great challenge. He has told us about a time-table of 5 to 10 years when not only *apartheid* would be abolished but South Africa would be able to have a democratically elected Government. He has told us that the question is not "if" but "when", not "whether" but "how" this change would be brought about. Many of us from this side of the world came to

see the struggle in Africa as having been fermented by Marxist hotheads who sleep with a copy of "Das Kapital" under their pillow with a rifle by their side. The very presence of a Bishop before us here, the very advocacy of the cause we are talking about by a Bishop, I presume, is adequate answer to those who say that we are fighting for African freedom because we want to satisfy the dictates of Marxism. I have always felt myself, that it is a betrayal of the great liberal traditions of the West to associate the freedom movement, the independence movement in Africa and in the rest of the world with only Marxism. We are grateful, naturally, for the assistance we do receive from either Marx or from our socialist friends, but physically, and I think this is a point which the Bishop has made this afternoon, the struggle is ours and in the end we shall succeed. The Bishop's programme of five points, which you are already familiar with, is moderate by normal expectations of our generations by those of us who are a little bit impatient; but the Bishop has always stressed that, as a clear indication of the will of South Africans to induce change, the minimum that he would demand of the South African Government is five points and with his permission I would like to recapitulate them.

The first point is that there must be an affirmation by the Government of South Africa that all the people of South Africa belong to that country, i.e. everybody must enjoy common citizenship of South Africa. The second point is that the greatest enemy to the future of stability in South Africa is the bantustan policy or programme. Therefore, that policy or programme must be scratched, thereby enabling everyone, regardless of colour, in South Africa, to be able to live and belong to that country. The third is the abolishing of bantu education which has been the source of rebellion and revolt on the part of the school children of South Africa. In connexion with that revolt of last spring the Bishop and his lovely wife were arrested last year. The fourth is that there should be total abolition, without condition, of the pass-laws — those laws that make it impossible for the African to determine where he would like to sleep, to work and where he would like to live and die. And fifthly, that there should be, without delay, a decision on the part of the South African Government to convene a national convention of all the people of South Africa, so that the people of South Africa can determine their own future. Naturally a corollary to this demand is that there must be an unconditional release of all the policital prisoners of South Africa, some of whom are the leaders of the national liberation movement, so that they can participate in that national convention. As I said, these are very moderate demands by our standards, the standards of our generation. These are very moderate demands but we are grateful to have the Bishop with us here and to share with us this afternoon, and I want to thank you again for the very kind words of address to the Committee and to my humble self. I must say that in my association with the United Nations two things have given me the greatest satisfaction. One was to be able to welcome the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe, Mr. Mugabe here, and he sat in the very seat you are sitting now. I was fortunate enough to be Chairman of the African Group then and it was a great feeling of

satisfaction for me to be able to welcome him here as the leader of his people after so many years of sacrifice and of struggle for independence of his people. The second occasion is today that we have been able to receive you here, after all that we heard about your dedication and commitment in the struggle and that you are here not to plead the cause of South Africa, because you managed to get a passport; that you are here in your own right to defend with great courage your convictions to continue with the struggle against *apartheid*. I am not sure whether many of my colleagues are familiar with the South African national anthem Nkosi Sikelel i Africa (God bless Africa). Many of us who went to church at the intersession yesterday had hoped that we would have the opportunity to sing it, but I think we will be doing the right thing if, at this stage, I could suggest, as a tribute to the visit of the Bishop to the United Nations, particularly to the meeting of the Special Committee against *Apartheid* if we could rise and sing Nkosi Sikelel i Africa (After the singing, the meeting was adjourned).

Security Council President Peter FLORIN (GDR), at right, meeting at UN Headquarters today with Bishop Desmond TUTU, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches.

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